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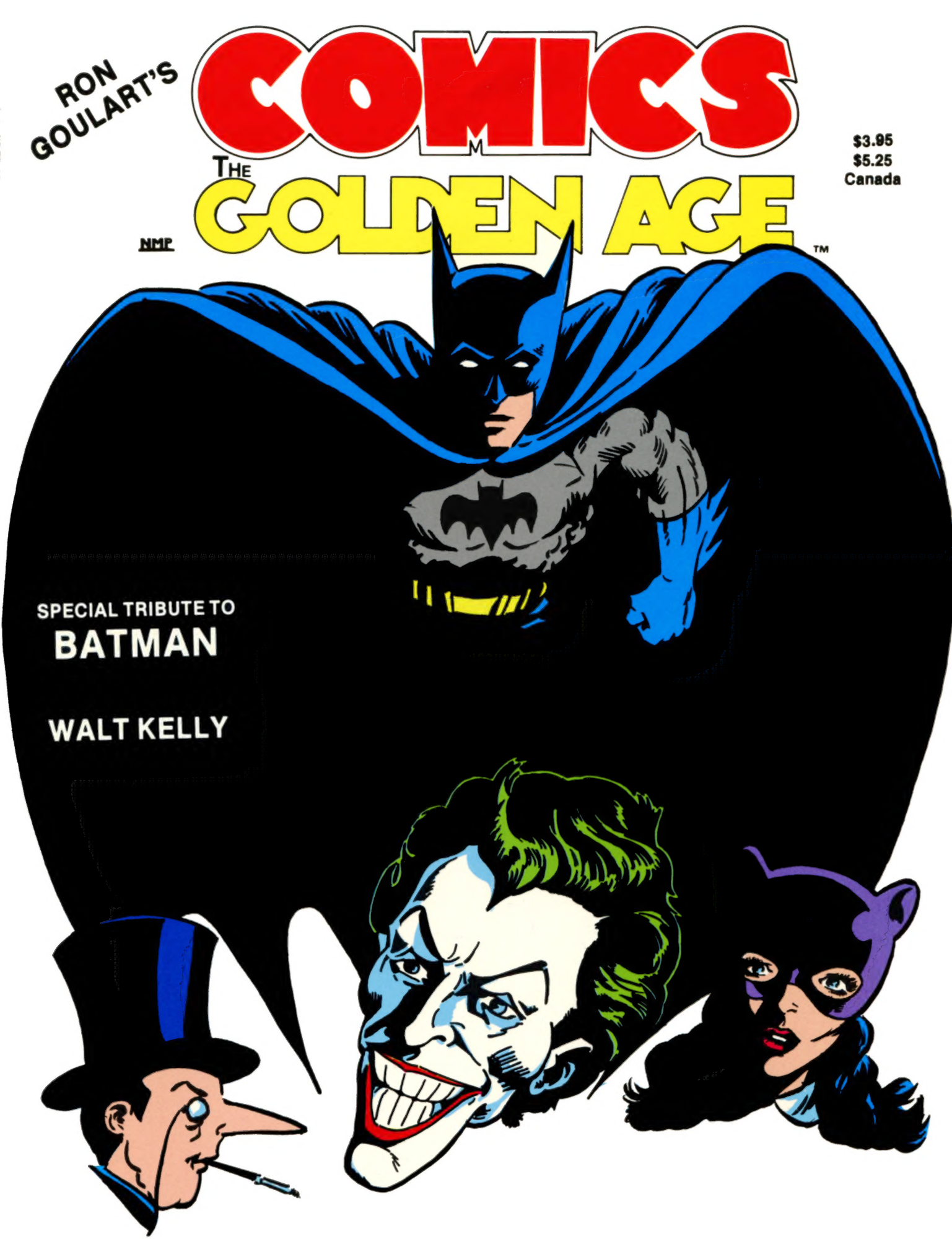

SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO
BATMAN

WALT KELLY

COMICS THE GOLDEN AGE

EDITED BY RON GOULART

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The beginnings of Batman, DC's caped crusader who's been striking fear into the hearts of criminals for over 45 years.

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EDITOR'S PAGE

Missing, for reasons I can no longer recall, Batman's debut in *Detective Comics* 27 back in the spring of 1939, I didn't make his acquaintance until four months later. That was when I purchased, with a dime cajoled out of my indulgent mother, *Detective* 31 (September, 1939). What hooked me originally was Bob Kane's impressive cover of a huge Batman looming above a spooky castle while a villain in red hood and robe carries an unconscious blonde lady through the fogshrouded night. Just the sort of stuff the Saturday matinee movies were made of. Inside I found Batman in action, described as a "weird menace" and an "eerie figure" as he leaped from one moonlit rooftop to another in search of his quarry.

Incredibly, that meeting took place forty-five years ago and here I am calling your attention to this issue's special section on Batman. We figure any comic book hero who's been in business for forty-five years is due a salute of some sort. In keeping with our steadfast policy, we're looking backward and concentrating on the Golden Age phase of his long and colorful career.

After a vacation of one issue, comics maven Jerry DeFuccio returns with a look at a gentleman who edited a whole stewpot of comic books back when.

Speaking of mavens, there is nobody in this land of ours who knows more about that pioneering private eye Nick Carter than J. Randolph Cox. We're pleased to have him aboard and writing about Nick's comic book career.

COMING ATTRACTIONS:

1985 marks the 50th Anniversary of DC Comics. And our next issue will be devoted to DC in the Golden Age, with special features and interviews covering everything from Superman to Scribbly. This is also the issue with which we make the big change, and what issue could have more deserved it. Beginning next issue the size of this magazine will dramatically increase(in page count, that is); we will begin to issue it as a book with perfect binding and the like; it will become a quarterly rather than a bimonthly; and, unfortunately, there will be something of an increase in cover price. But it should be worth it.

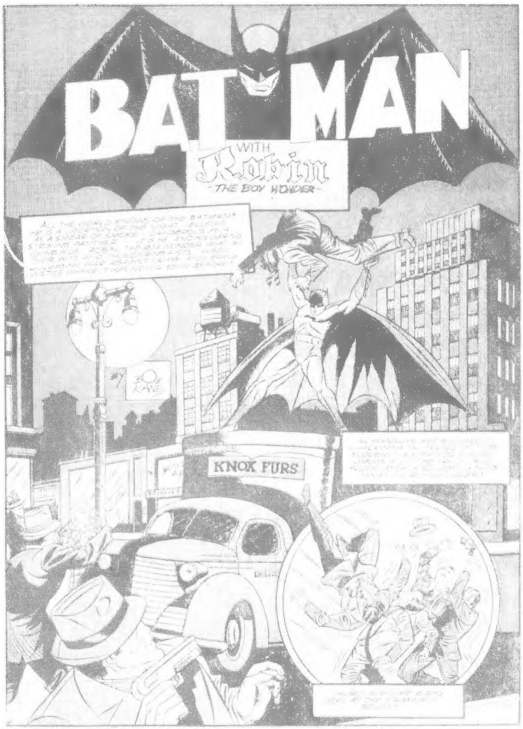
HERO ★★ PROFILE

If the Golden Age of Comics had anything it was heroes. Big heroes, little heroes, business-suited heroes and colorfully-costumed heroes of every shape and coloration. This feature will profile one of the stars of the 1940s every issue.

BATMAN

Forty-five years ago a small typeset announcement appeared in *Detective Comics*. "THE BATMAN!" it said. "This new thrilling adventure strip starts in the May issue of DETECTIVE COMICS! Don't miss it!" A month later 27 (May, 1939) hit the stands and there on the cover was Batman, swinging over the rooftops with an armlock around the throat of a hoodlum in a green pinstripe suit. Inside the new hero led off the issue in a short, six-page story. Although the pointy ears on his cowl were a little lopsided and his batwing cape didn't fit exactly right, there was something intriguing about him. Once he shaped up and got his act together there was no stopping him. For a costumed hero without a single superpower he's managed to survive quite well while hundreds of latter day competitors have long since fallen by the wayside.

At the time Batman took to the rooftops there were few costumed crimefighters doing business in the comic books. During the eleven months since the advent of Superman only the Crimson Avenger had set up shop. A



cloaked and masked fellow whose methods of operation were remarkably similar to those of radio's Green Hornet, the Avenger debuted in *Detective* 20 (October, 1938). It wasn't until after Batman that the deluge commenced. Before 1939 was over Wonder Man, the Sandman, the Flame, Blue Beetle, the Human Torch, Sub-Mariner and Amazing Man had all reached the newsstands. 1940 would see dozens more, including the Flash, Captain Marvel and Green Lantern.

Living up to its name, *Detective Comics* had featured nothing but detective characters in its first two years. Private eyes like Slam Bradley, Bruce Nelson and Larry Steele, official lawmen of various sorts such as Speed Saunders, Buck Marshall and Steve Malone. Even the redcloaked Crimson Avenger devoted himself to solving crimes and bringing criminals to justice. Batman therefore, when joining the magazine, was expected to carry on in this tradition. And that he did for the most part, rarely forgetting that he was basically a detective. True, he dressed in a rather striking fashion, but so did many of the pulp magazine crimebusters who'd inspired his creators.

One of the things the new original-material comic books of the 1930s did was deliver pulp magazine and movie elements in a funny paper format. The popular entertainments the artists and writers of this burgeoning new industry had enjoyed while growing up now got recycled and turned into comic book stories. Batman is one of the most successful examples of this, inspired by movie melodramas and pulpwood yarns but becoming a distinctive character in his own right. When Bob Kane and his writer friend Bill Finger invented Batman, they were only a few years out of their teens themselves and still very much in touch with the kind of adventure material that had excited them as kids.

Though pulpwood fiction magazines had been around for most of the century, it was in the Thirties that the single hero pulps really blossomed. *The Shadow* began in 1931, followed by *Doc Savage*, *The Spider* and *The Phantom Detective* in 1933, *The Whisperer* in 1936 and *The Avenger* in 1939. The Thirties was definitely the decade of the mystery men and they were to be found in just about every other popular entertainment medium as well. Radio offered the Lone Ranger and the Green Hornet, movies gave you such as Zorro, the Scarlet Pimpernel and the Lone Wolf, newspaper strips had the Phantom.

Bill Finger once said, "My first script was a take-off on a Shadow story...I patterned my style of writing Batman after the Shadow. Also after the Warner Bros. movies, the gangster movies." Kane has mentioned that another source of inspiration was a 1926 movie called *The Bat*, "in which the villain wore a bat-like costume which was quite awesome." Originally *The Bat* was a highly successful Broadway play by Avery Hopwood and Mary Roberts Rinehart. It was filmed again in 1931, under the title *the Bat Whispers*, with tough guy Chester Morris starring. Basically an old dark house story, it has to do with stolen money, secret rooms and passages and a crazed killer who dresses up like a bat. I recently saw the 1931 talkie version and the nightstalking Bat,

especially when prowling the rooftops or casting his weird shadow on a wall, certainly seems to be an ancestor of our Batman.

In civilian life Batman was Bruce Wayne, "a bored young socialite." When night fell, however, playboy Wayne became "powerful and awesome" and a "weird menace to all crime." Unlike his more sedate contemporaries in the private investigator line, Batman didn't wait for cases to come to him. He prowled the city (New York in the earliest adventures and then Gotham), looking for trouble. He always found it, dropping down on burglaries, kidnapings, murders and worse. Although not above wisecracking while tangling with a half dozen gunmen, Batman was a pretty grim vigilante type in his early days. Besides his gadget-laden utility belt, he carried a .45 automatic and was not above using it. A trained athlete and acrobat, he was capable of breaking a man's neck with a wellplaced kick.

During his first months as a nocturnal avenger Batman alternated between combating gangsters and criminal masterminds. In *Detective* 29 and 30 he encountered a mad scientist who'd more than earned his nickname Dr. Death. Issues 31 and 32 found him journeying to Paris and Hungary to save his fiancee, Julie Madison, from the sinister Monk. A versatile as well as a nasty fellow, the Monk was both a vampire and a werewolf. In this two parter we get our first glimpse of the batarang and the batplane. In these distant days the citizens of Manhattan were unused to such stylized modes of transportation as the batplane and when Batman flies over most of them are frightened—"We are attacked by Martians!" A few issues later Batman meets yet another master villain in the person of Professor Hugo Strange. A Moriarty sort and possessed of a "brilliant but distorted brain," the prof recurs a few times in the chronicles. He can make lightning, produce crippling fog and is also handy at creating giant man-monsters.

Batman's origin, the inside story on "who he is and how he came to be," didn't appear until *Detective* 33 (November, 1939). In a terse two page account we are told that fifteen years

AS THE BATMAN'S BACK IS TURNED
THAT SHADOW... LOOKS LIKE DANGER BEHIND ME
WOW! THAT NOSE ROCKS JUST A SECOND AS BATMAN...
HONEY!
YOU THUGS ARE OUT FOR ONE! WELL, GO IN FOR BASIC FEED OF CANDLE-STICK!
TRY A MODERN ELECTRIC BULB FOR A CHANGE!
BOOM
OWWW!
AS THE BATMAN'S FEARLESS YOUNG COHORT PLUNGES INTO THE FRAY...
WOW!!
YOU'RE EVEN MORE OUTRAGEOUS THAN YOUR PALS YOU USE THE STARS.
A FURIOUS FLURRY OF SLASHING FISTS... AND THE DYNAMIC DUO QUICKLY DISPOSES OF THE CRIMINALS...
FEELING BETTER, COMMISSIONER?
I'M SORRY ROBIN, BUT ON THE FLOOR!
SEEMS TO BE A LICENSE OF SOME KIND
A LICENSE TO PRACTICE OF THESE CRIMINALS!
WHO'S LARRY THE JUDGE?
LICENSED TO
This is to certify that
I'VE NEVER HEARD OF IT BEFORE... BUT TERRY WITH IT IS CONNECTED WITH WHAT HE WANTED TO DISCUSS WITH YOU!
I SEE IT CAN TAKE THESE CROOKS TO A LITTLE WHILE!

ago Bruce Wayne's parents were gunned down on the street by a stickup man and that the boy vowed to dedicate his life to "warring on criminals." Having no supernatural powers, Wayne has to work at becoming a hero. He devotes years to preparing for his crimefighting career, turning himself into both a master scientist and a crackerjack athlete. Determining that he'll need a disguise capable of striking terror into the hearts of criminals, he's inspired by the intrusion of a bat into his den. "It's an omen...I shall become a BAT!" The origin, with a new splash panel, turned up again in *Batman* 1 (Spring, 1940).

Another major event in Batman's life was recounted in *Detective* 38 (April, 1940). He acquired a sidekick. "An exciting new figure whose incredible gymnastic and athletic feats will astound you...A laughing, fighting young daredevil who scoffs at danger like the legendary Robin Hood whose name and spirit he has adopted...Robin the Boy Wonder." Bob Kane once explained, "In my subconscious mind I longed to be like Robin when I was his age, fighting alongside

his idol Batman (or in my case, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr.). I figured Robin would appeal to all children of his age group as an identifiable person for their inner fantasies." Finger amplified, "Batman was a combination of Fairbanks and Sherlock Holmes. Holmes had his Watson. The thing that bothered me was that Batman didn't have anyone to talk to, and it got a little tiresome always having him thinking. I found as I went along Batman needed a Watson to talk to. That's how Robin came to be. Bob called me over and said he was going to put a boy in the story to identify with Batman. I thought it was a great idea." Jerry Robinson, Kane's assistant at the time, had a few more facts to add about the dynamic youth's gestation. "I thought of Batman's new partner as a sort of young Robin Hood....I remember plugging the name Robin against others that didn't seem quite as good," he's recalled. "Once we agreed upon the name, I suggested adapting Robin Hood's costume for the new character."

Much later Kane had some second thoughts about the addition of the Boy Wonder. "I prefer Batman operating alone and mysteriously, like the Shadow," he told an interviewer in the early 1970s. "Before Robin he was that way, and his style changed then. When Robin comes in, they begin punning and joking." Even at the time not all kid readers doted on and identified with Robin. Jules Feiffer has said, "One need only look at him to see he could fight better, play ball better, eat better, and live better—for while I lived in the east Bronx, Robin lived in a mansion, and while I was trying, somehow, to please my mother—and getting it all wrong, Robin was rescuing Batman and getting the gold medals. He didn't even have to live with his mother. Robin wasn't skinny. He had the build of a middleweight, the legs of a wrestler. He was obviously an 'A' student, the center of every circle, the one picked for greatness in the crowd—God, how I hated him."

The majority of readers, though, liked the new team. Rival crimefighters were also fascinated and over the next couple years many added a boy companion to the staff—Sandy, Roy,

Bucky, Speedy, Dusty, etc. Batman, as noted earlier, was given his own magazine in 1940, the first DC hero so honored after Superman. It began as a quarterly, jumped to bimonthly with the sixth issue and by the 1950s was a monthly. Batman and Robin also showed up in the 1940 edition of *New York World's Fair* and, thereafter, were in its successor *World's Finest*.

Why exactly did Batman and Robin succeed where so many others failed? For one thing there was the look of Bob Kane's work. His cartoony style, carried on and amplified by Robinson, fit the sort of melodramatic, nighttime stories he and Finger loved to spin. "Batman's world took control of the reader," says Feiffer. "Kane's was an authentic fantasy, a genuine vision, so that however one might nit-pick the components, the end product remained an impregnable whole: gripping and original." The stories, particularly in the World War II years, were good. Borrowing a little from O. Henry, from Damon Runyon, from the movies. And, of course, Batman and Robin came up against, as we'll see in another piece, some of the best all time villains in comics—the Joker, the Penguin, Catwoman, etc.

The puns, too, were fun, the badinage between the crimebusting team and the crooks. Robin fighting a crook on a golf course, tossing a ball into the thug's open mouth and exclaiming, naturally, "A hole-in-one!" Batman smacking the Penguin with a handy mop and saying, "This will clean away some of your hot air!" And you know that almost any specific locale was going to inspire wisecracks. During one battle with the Joker and his minions in a post office the following lines were among those heard—"That cancels you!" "You can start a stamp collection with these, Joker!" "Gangway! The mail must go through!" Any regular Forties reader can readily conjure up the pictures to go with this dialogue.

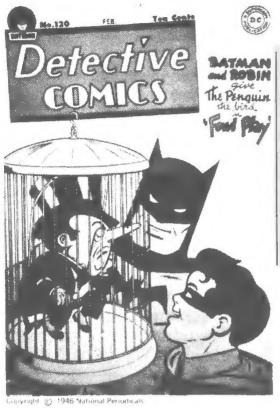
Another appeal was the gimmicks and props. The batplane and batmobile, in their various incarnations. The utility belts, which seemed to contain an endless supply of life-saving gadgets. The Batcave, which first showed up in the early 1940s, was also fascinating and was something I wouldn't have minded having under my house in place of a damp, musty basement. The cave kept expanding, growing from a garage to a garage-laboratory-trophy room.

The subsidiary characters, too, were appealing. Commissioner Gordon, who was in the saga from the very first episode, was on the dull side. But any policeman who was imaginative enough to use the bat signal had to be okay. Alfred, a very Wodehousian butler, joined on in 1943. He was a likeable fellow, whether in his original fat mode or in his later slim state.

The fact that both Batman and Robin were vulnerable, that they could be hurt or killed, added to their appeal. Though rationally you knew DC wasn't going to let Kane and crew kill off either member of its hottest team, you suspended logic and anguished over Batman's reaching the diving bell before Robin suffocated. You hoped against hope that they'd find a way out of the subterranean room before the spiked ceiling minced them.

Unlike the other heroes we've profiled in this section, Batman is still very much with us. So this account can't conclude with a rundown of his final days and last adventures. Although there are some of us who feel the real Batman hasn't been seen since...

ROGUES GALLERY



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THE BATMAN ROGUES GALLERY

One of the best ways to judge a comic book hero is by the villainous company he keeps. Batman and Robin, especially during the Golden Age, did combat with quite a few attractive and entertaining villains. Some were star turns, many were in the second banana class. In the following pages we'll take a look at both the greats and the near greats.

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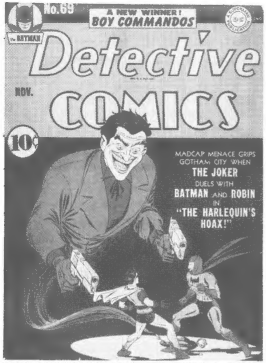
THE STAR VILLAINS

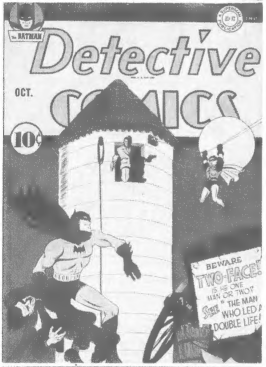
Batman's leading opponent is unquestionably that "harlequin of hate," the Joker. A man who combines the mastermind qualities of Professor Moriarty, the fiendishness of Fu Manchu and the audacity of Groucho Marx, the Joker first struck in *Batman* 1 (Spring, 1940). In fact, he struck twice, in the first and last of the magazines four tales. Borrowing some of his tricks from such flamboyant predecessors as the Bat of stage and screen, the Joker was fond of warning his victims in advance as to exactly where and when he would rob and kill them. Until he crossed swords with Batman and Robin, he'd been getting away with this sort of behavior.

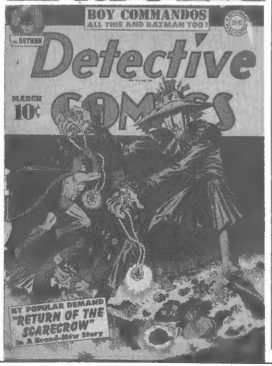
The most appealing thing about the Joker was his inventiveness. While his main goal in life remained loot — jewels, cash, objects of art — he was continually varying his methods. On one caper he and his gang would rely on costumes and uniforms, next he'd base a series of murders on the punchlines of old jokes. On another occassion he undertook to commit a crime a day, daring Batman to stop him. On another he made use of flower pots with built-in chloroform sprayers to commit his robberies. He prided himself on being perplexing. He once gave money away, once began a series of crimes by stealing a kid's autographed baseball. And there was always the challenge to Batman and the law, the cryptic message sent, the note left at the scene of the crime.

The purple-clad Joker quickly became the team's most frequently fought foe. In 1940 they met him five times in *Batman* and *Detective*. The number of clashes dropped to three in 1941, then climbed to an impressive eight in 1942. The total was down to four in 1943, but considering that the Joker had been killed in 1942 that wasn't bad. The demise of the master of mockery took place in *Detective* 64 (June, 1942), the same issue that introduced Simon & Kirby's Boy Commandos. The Joker walks the last mile and we see him executed in the electric chair. Fortunately for all lovers of first-rate villains, his henchmen administer a secret drug to his corpse, "shocking him back to life!" Learning little from his execution, and this may be further proof that capital punishment really isn't a deterrent to crime, the Joker quickly resumes his evil prankish ways.

We do get a brief, tantalizing glimpse







of what a nice guy the Joker could be in *Batman* 16 (April-May, 1943). In a story entitled *The Joker Reforms* the grinning gargoyle of greed suffers a head injury in a plane crash. This transforms him into a prince of good fellows, the benefactor of a small Western town and the enemy of crime. A conk on the noggin, alas, causes him to revert to his original self. After that it's one more mad scheme after another.

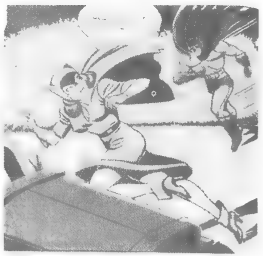
There's little doubt as to who *the* woman in Batman's life is. She too first showed up in the fateful first issue of *Batman*. Calling herself the Cat initially, she is first seen as a clever and cunning jewel thief at a party aboard a posh yacht. Although Batman prevents the attractive, darkhaired young woman from stealing a single gem, he allows her to escape. "Lovely girl! What eyes!" he reflects after Robin chides him over the Cat's escape. You'll note that Batman seems to have somewhat different tastes than the amiable playboy Bruce Wayne, and is capable of being attracted by a beautiful lady crook.

She returns in the second issue of *Batman*, this time called alternately the Cat and Cat-woman. In this adventure the Joker is on hand as well and the two compete for a cask of rare gems. When the meanminded Joker is about to do Robin in with a poison hypo, the Catwoman intercedes and offers him the loot if he'll spare the lad. Once again, at the story's end the lady escapes.

She pops up again in the spring of 1942, for the first time wearing a cat mask. Batman thwarts the mistress of menace's latest jewelry racket and also saves her life when one of her disgruntled minions tries to shoot her. Grateful, she unmasks and kisses him. "And before the startled Batman can recover his wits, the shadowy Catwoman has slipped out of the room, like some elusive phantom." That remained the pattern for most of their subsequent encounters.

Another of Batman's favorite foes was the polite and dapper little scoundrel known as the Penguin. Dressed in tails and top hat, with one of his dangerous umbrellas clutched in his gloved hand, he wandered onto the scene in *Detective* 58 (December, 1941). A loner, he simply walks in on one of the biggest racketeers in Gotham City and takes over his mob. He recurred in the next issue and from then on made frequent appearances. In *Batman* 25 (October-November, 1944) he even teams up with the Joker. It isn't an especially fruitful or efficient merger, since the two spend much of their time squabbling and calling each other names — "I'll teach you manners, you babbling buffoon!" "Why, you waddling windbag!"

One of the great moments in Golden Age comics occurs at the end of the Batman yarn in *Detective* 66 (August, 1942). Two-Face is holding a gun on Batman and he tells him that he'll flip his two-headed coin to decide what to do. "If the scarred side comes up . . . I kill you and continue a career of crime, and if the good side comes up . . . I go with you!" He tosses the coin, it hits the floor and rolls until it hits a crack "and stands on edge!" We have to wait for two months before we learn which way Two-Face will go. In issue 68, although he doesn't shoot Batman, he



does resume his life of evil deeds. His whole career, however, seems to cease in *Detective* 80 (October, 1943), when Harvey Kent, former handsome District Attorney, is rehabilitated and has the half of his face that was horribly scarred by acid restored. Unfortunately, so novel a villain, a man who was, in his own words, "A living Jekyll and Hyde," couldn't be allowed to retire and he was to come back again and again.

A colorful villain of the early 1940s was the Scarecrow. Although he appeared only a couple of times, he managed to make a strong impression. An eccentric and disgruntled academic, the long lean Jonathan Crane decides to apply his knowledge of psychology to the acquiring of large amounts of money by criminal means. Dressing up to resemble a sort of demented Ray Bolger, he becomes the Scarecrow, "a symbol of poverty and fear combined." Initially he hires himself out to scare people, but resorts to murder when the scare tactics don't get results. Batman and Robin put an end to his shabby career in *World's Finest* 3 (Fall, 1941), but he strikes again in *Detective* 73 (March, 1943). This time he uses one of the Joker's mannerisms and keeps leaving Batman challenging messages about his next crimes. Being an ex-teacher, he scrawls these taunts on school slates in chalk.

THE MINOR LEAGUE BAD GUYS

Batman and Robin used up a lot of crooks and villains. Twelve a year in *Detective Comics* alone, not counting minions, stooges and toadies. Add to that one more in each of the four adventures in the *Batman* bimonthly and four additional each year in the *World's Finest* quarterly stories. That's a grand total of forty criminals per annum. Quite obviously they couldn't all be equally great and colorful. Yet even though they were often minor threats, they deserve a bit of notice for having the nerve to pit themselves against the formidable dynamic duo and filling in the gaps while star heavies like the Joker, the Penguin and Catwoman were resting up between schemes.

Since Batman and Robin operated in a large city, they had their share of run of the mill crooks and crime bosses to deal with. These included fellows like Bugs Norton, Rocky Grimes, the Thumb, Big Costello and Zucco. This last racketeer was riding high in Gotham when Batman and Robin teamed up and was their first jointly-defeated bad guy. Most of these lesser gangsters shared one easily recognizable trait. When fleeing the scene of a crime, they always carried a satchel of loot in the left hand and fired back over the shoulder at pursuing lawmen with a blazing .45 automatic.

Perhaps sensing something of a kindred spirit in Batman, quite a few villains with a flair for dressing up in weird outfits challenged him. There was, for example, the Cavalier, who first surfaced in *Detective* 81 (November, 1943). Billed as "the dashing desperado," he looked like Bob Kane's boyhood idol, Douglas Fairbanks Sr., dressed like a musketeer and carried a sword. Aware of the tough competition he faced in the bizarre villain area, the Cavalier warns Batman and Robin that he intends to be "an even greater inconvenience to you than the Joker and the Penguin."

Among the other oddly-attired crooks and killers who tangled with the duo in the Forties were Clayface, a *Phantom of the Opera* sort who did his evil deeds on a Hollywood soundstage, the Conjurer, the Robber Baron, Granda the Mystic, Dmitri the diabolic puppet master and Mr. Baffle, whose costume consisted of a stylish tuxedo. There was also a trio of larcenous acrobats who did their dirty work wearing devil suits.

Crazed medics and flawed intellectuals also tried to outfox BM and the Boy Wonder. The wicked Dr. Thorne can be found in *Detective* 77 (JUly, 1944) running a crime clinic. Then there was the fiendish Dr. Deker, whose use of a machine that grabs secrets out of people's minds earned him the nasty nickname of the Brain Burglar. Even more dangerous was Professor Radium, one of the earliest radioactive villains in comics. And in *World's Finest* 7 (Spring, 1943) a crazed mystery novelist switches to plotting real life misdeeds and calling the operation the Crime of the Month.

Unlike many of their comic book contemporaries, Batman and Robin didn't get too involved in World War II. They spent the early and middle 1940s on the home front, keeping track of domestic villainies for the most part. With the exception of a few encounters with Nazi agents, they ignored the fact that there was a war on. For slavering Japanese and brutal Nazis you had to look elsewhere. The only sinister Orientals the team went up against were the sort who hung around in Chinatown. In addition to metropolitan criminals, they battled an occassional pirate and smuggler and even, when vacationing out west, rounded up a gang of cattle rustlers.

Quite obviously part of the success of the team was due to the quality of evildoers they busied themselves with during their first years in the crimefighting trade. Their prime antagonists were among the best in the business and even their lesser foes were, for the most part, a fascinating bunch.

BOB KANE and COMPANY

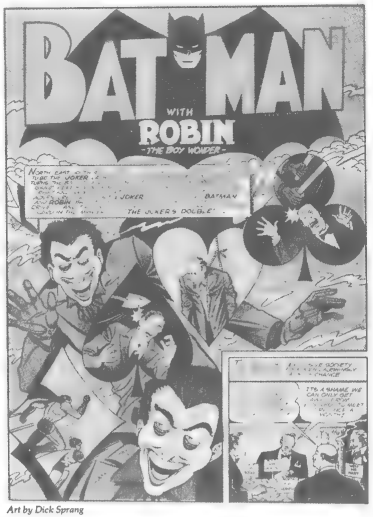
CATCH COLD WITH HIS CHEST EXPOSED LIKE THAT?
WHO ARE YOU?
I KNOW! WHO HE IS! THAT'S THE BATMAN! HE'S DYNAMITE!
THE BATMAN, EH? WELL, YOU'RE NOT SO SMART AS YOU MIGHT

Batman was the creation of a young man from the Bronx who'd drawn gag cartoons and humorous fillers before trying his hand at more serious fare. He had some help from a young shoe salesman with aspirations to be a writer. Eventually their increasingly successful hero would require a whole crew of artists, writers and editors to produce his adventures.

Bob Kane began his professional career in 1936, drawing a funny feature for the shortlived *Wow!* The editor there was Jerry Iger and when the Iger-Eisner shop was formed the following year, the twenty-one year old Kane was invited to join up. He did gag cartoons, under such titles as *Jest Laffs*, and a comedy/adventure strip called *Peter Pupp*. These ran in *Jumbo Comics*. In the Pupp feature, which looks to have been inspired in part by Floyd Gottfredson's *Mickey Mouse* newspaper strip, Kane first dealt with some of the elements he'd be handling more seriously in *Batman*. Pete was a daring little fellow and a typical four-page sequence had him going up in a fighter plane to combat a giant robot controlled by a satanic villain with one eye in the middle of his forehead.

Kane's first sales to DC were also humorous, one- and two-page comedy fillers. There were *Professor Doolittle*, a pantomime effort for *Adventure*, *Ginger Snap*, about a wise little girl, for *More Fun* and *Oscar the Gumshoe* for *Detective*.

In his entry in Jerry Bails' *Who's Who of American Comic Books* Kane lists the artists who had a major influence on him as Alex Raymond, Billy DeBeck



Art by Dick Sprang

Art by Jerry Robinson

and Milton Caniff. His first serious feature, *Rusty and his Pals*, shows the Caniff influence clearly. It commenced in *Adventure Comics* in 1938 and dealt with three boys, Rusty, Specs and Tubby, and their Pat Ryan-type mentor, Steve Carter. Like Caniff's Terry, Rusty and company tangled with pirates and sinister Orientals. Kane's drawing was cartoony on the early episodes, but he grew a bit more serious as *Rusty* progressed, even emulating Caniff's style of inking.

The scripts for his first adventurous venture were provided by Kane's Bronx neighbor Bill Finger. Two years older than Kane and working at selling shoes, Finger was a dedicated reader of the pulps and a movie fan. After the two met at a party, they decided to collaborate. Their next joint effort was *Batman* and then came *Clip Carson*, which began in *Action Comics 14* (July, 1939). "I've always liked Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*," Finger once explained. "So I thought we might have a great white hunter type—one whose adventures would take him anywhere, Africa, South America, anywhere." Finger never got credit on any of the Kane features and it wasn't until he helped create Green Lantern in 1940 that his name began to appear in comic books. Except for a spell of TV writing, Finger remained in comics for most of his life. He died in 1974.

The other early script writer on Batman was the prolific Gardner F. Fox. "I started with the second one, or soon after," Fox has said. He's certain the third Batman yarn, the one that pitted him against Dr. Death, is his. And for *Detective* 31 and 32 he wrote the twoparter dealing with the Monk. "I didn't stay on Batman that long. Bill Finger was an old friend of Bob Kane and wanted to write him, so they gave me other things to write." Among the other things Fox went on to write were Sandman, Dr. Fate, the Flash, Hawkman, the Justice Society of America adventures, Skyman, Starman and quite a few others. In his late twenties when he started writing for comic books, Fox had originally intended to devote his life to being a lawyer. But when his friend Vincent Sullivan, a DC editor, suggested he try a script, Fox "decided to give the comics a try."

Within less than a year Batman was established as the definite star of *Detective*. His monthly adventures had grown from six to twelve pages, he began appearing on each and every cover. Kane, quite probably in anticipation of even more expansion, gathered a team of boy wonders to assist him. The first was Jerry Robinson, seventeen and fresh out of school. "I'd met Bob the summer after I graduated from high school," he has said. "In those days, white painter's jackets were very popular with college kids, and students would paint all sorts of razzmatazz on their jackets. I decorated my own as I had been the cartoonist on my high school paper. I was wearing this jacket while waiting to play tennis at a resort when this fellow came up and asked who had drawn the cartoons. He turned out to be Bob Kane...and he offered me a job as his assistant if I was willing to come to New York City. It seemed a great way to pay my college expenses so I moved to New York and transferred to Columbia...I began lettering the strip and inking the background. After a while, I started to ink most of the

BAT-MAN AND ROBIN
WE'VE GOT THE JUMP ON 'EM, ROBIN!
YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN, ROBIN! KALE'S TRYING TO MAKE A RUN FOR IT!
HOLD ON, MISTER... YOU'RE GOING PAST A RED LIGHT!
BLAST YOU, BATMAN!
A LITTLE IRONICAL, SAY I, MISTER... THAT A MAN WHO PLAYED AROUND WITH FIRE SHOULD BE PUT OUT BY WATER!

Art by Jack Burnley

figures as well, and pretty soon Bob would just pencil the strip and I would do the complete inking."

A natural artist, Robinson improved rapidly and was soon soloing on some Batman and Robin episodes. He also began to be influenced by other cartoonists, especially the gifted Mort Meskin. At one point Robinson shared a studio with Meskin and Bernie Klein, a promising young cartoonist who was killed in the service during World War II. Meskin, one of the best men to work in Golden Age comics, was an illustrator at heart and he could do things that were beyond the more cartoony comic book artists. His figure work was expert, his staging caused the action to flow from panel to panel. A modest, shy man, Meskin nonetheless had an important influence on the comics of the 1940s. His most successful disciple was Robinson, who eventually changed the entire look of the Batman stories. If you follow Robinson's stuff from 1939 into the early 1940s you can see continual change and improvement. This culminated in the covers and stories he did for *Batman* and *Detective Comics* in 1942 and 1943.

For *Daredevil* in 1941 Robinson did a war-oriented mystery man named London. This one he got to sign. By the middle 1940s he had left Batman and was drawing the Green Hornet for the Harvey Bros. After the war he teamed with Meskin and they produced some handsome work on the Fighting Yank, the Black Terror, Vigilante and Johnny Quick. In the early 1950s Robinson drew an attractive but not successful adventure strip titled Jet Scott. He thereafter switched to humor with newspaper features such as *Still Life* and *Flubs & Fluffs*.

George Roussos was nineteen when he went to work inking for Bob Kane in 1939. He branched out in the early 1940s, inking also for Bob Wood. This accounts for the many similarities between Wood's Target and the wartime Batman. On his own Roussos drew *Nightro* in *Daredevil* and *Air Wave* in *Detective*. He did some striking coloring on this latter feature, although he's claimed that was mostly to hide his bad inking. Another anonymous Batman inker was Charles Paris, who went to work for Kane in the middle 1940s and also inked much of the newspaper strip. Jack Burnley had been doing sports panels for King Features throughout the 1930s. He graduated to comic books, drawing Starman. DC editor Whit Ellsworth also put him to work ghosting stories for both Superman and Batman. Burnley, who had a meticulous and realistic style, did covers as well, for *Action*, *Adventure* and *World's Finest*. He pencilled the 1940s *Batman* Sunday page as well as a few of the daily continuities. When he left comic books in the late 1940s, he returned to newspaper sports cartooning.

Dick Sprang first drew Batman in 1943. A freelance pulp, comic and advertising artist since the Thirties, he worked directly for Whit Ellsworth and had no contact with Bob Kane. According to Sprang, he merely walked into DC, showed his work and was offered the job. For a sample he did "a one page *Terry and the Pirates* type story. I managed to drag about everything possible into one page." After looking at the page, Ellsworth had Sprang try three Batman audition pages. He liked those and Sprang began an association that was to continue for almost two decades. His first stories, and covers, were for the *Batman* bimonthly and from 1944 on he was providing most of the Batman stories for *Detective*, too.

As Batman continued to flourish sundry others—Otto Binder, Jack Shiff, Win Mortimer, Mort Weisinger, etc.—took a hand in his broadening career. But during the Golden Age those mentioned above were the chief contributors.

PORTFOLIO

Atoman, an early postwar superhero, failed to thrive. He appeared in just two issues of his own magazine early in 1946 and then was gone. *Atoman* was published by writer Ken Crossen, who also issued *Green Lama* and *Golden Lad*. He promised his readers Crossen Publications stood for "(1) superior quality of story—free from horror and sensationalism; (2) excellence of artwork; (3) the principles which are set forth in the Constitution of the United States of America and taught by modern educators." On (2), at least, Crossen delivered, as this handsome example of Jerry Robinson's post-Batman work demonstrates.

Now and then a villain or monster stole the show. One of the few such who actually got to star in his own feature was that likeable walking compost pile known as the Heap. Taken from *Airboy Comics*, our story is drawn by the gifted Dan Barry.

For a few brief years in the middle 1940s John Giunta produced some striking, highly individual stuff for comic books. Though he drew for outfits such as Fawcett and Hillman, he also turned up in some obscure and shortlived magazines. This Captain Combat episode is from the first and only issue of *Star Studded Comics*, a 25¢ giant published in 1945. At about this same time Giunta's protege and assistant was a young fellow named Frank Frazetta.

THE HEAP
O, HEAP! SO LONG AS I HAVE MY POWER OF THE GODS, I WILL WATCH OVER AND PROTECT YOU-AND SHOW YOU THE PATH OF PEACE AND GOODNESS! YOU SHALL LEARN TO GUARD YOURSELF AGAINST ALL HAZARDS!
YOUR ONLY DANGER TO MAN LIES IN YOUR NEED OF FOOD -- FOR IN THIS WAY YOU DESTROY THE FERTILE LAND OF ITS USEFUL VEGETATION. I MUST LEAVE YOU TO A TEMPTATION -- IN THE FINDING WHERE YOU MIGHT FIND ANOTHER SOURCE OF FOOD!

MAY YOU FIND REST, O HEAP, ON THIS COOL PEACEFUL ISLAND OF LANGEEN!
... AND LATER, IN THE NATIVE VILLAGE ON THE ISLAND OF LANGEEN---
KING ONA KOONA! A STRANGE CREATURE LIKE A TREE DESTROYS OUR FERTILE LANDS!
WAIT, MY PEOPLE! THIS CREATURE MUST HAVE BEEN SENT BY THE GODS! WE CANNOT RISE AGAINST IT.
MEANWHILE ON A YACHT IN THE HARBOR
YOU WERE RIGHT, TOLE! THE HEAP IS HERE--AND HE'S WRECKIN' THE WHOLE JOINT! BUT HOW DOES THAT FIT INTO YOUR PLANS?
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS CHANCE FOR YEARS, RAINIER!
WHAT'S YOUR ANGLE, TOLE?
BLACK CHEST OF LANGEEN! IT HOLDS A FORTUNE IN PRICELESS BLACK PEARLS!
T-THAT'S CALLED THE CHEST OF DEATH! THE NATIVES'LL KILL YOU IF YOU GO LOOKING FOR IT!
NOT WITH THE HEAP'S HELP! COME ALONG, RAINIER! WE'RE GOING TO SEE KING ONA KOONA!
O, GREAT ONA KOONA I BRING YOU GIFTS FROM THE GODS! THEY HAVE SPOKEN TO ME--AND I HAVE COME TO HELP YOU!
THE GODS ARE WISE! MY ISLAND IN GREAT DANGER! THE HEAP, GOD OF VENGEANCE, DESTROYS OUR LANDS!
2

LET ME LEND MY POWERS TO AID YOU, ONA KOONA! LO! I AM TOLE... SON OF TORRA-KIKI... THE GOD OF FIRE!
NO! NOT FIRE! WE CANNOT USE FIRE IN VIOLENCE AGAINST THE GODS!
STAY YOUR FEAR, O GREAT ONE! FOR I, PRINCE OF FIRE, CAN SAVE YOUR PEOPLE AND YOUR ISLAND FROM THIS EVIL GOD OF VENGEANCE!
RAINIER! GO BACK TO THE YACHT AND GET A COUPLE OF BLOW TORCHES!
BLOW TORCHES! I THINK THE HEAT'S BEGINNING TO GET YOU, TOLE!
ANYTHING YOU COMMAND, PRINCE OF FIRE, SHALL BE YOURS FOR SAVING MY KINGDOM!
SO BE IT, ONA KOONA! THE GODS WILL ADVISE ME!
... AFTER RAINIER HAS RETURNED WITH THE BLOW TORCHES ....
NOW I'VE GOT TO MAKE THIS LOOK GOOD-OR ELSE WE'LL NEVER GET THE CHEST OF BLACK PEARLS!
AW, THEY'LL NEVER CATCH ON! I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GONNA DO!
TORRA-KIKI-OOMBA GOOMBA BOOBA! MAY THE GOD OF FIRE GUIDE ME TO VICTORY!

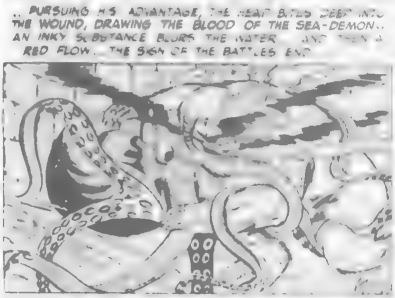
OH, PRINCE OF FIRE, MAY YOU STOP THIS HEAP CREATURE FROM RUINING OUR CULTIVATED LANDS!
I WILL GO ALONE AND DESTROY THIS CREATURE!
LOOK! THERE'S THE HEAP! GET THE TORCHES, RAINIER!
HERE Y'ARE! IT'S A GOOD THING THE NATIVES DIDN'T FOLLOW! NOW THEY'LL BELIEVE ANYTHING WE TELL 'EM!
HERE! TAKE THESE BLASTED TORCHES AND BURN THAT HEAP TO THE GROUND!
WAIT A MINUTE, TOLE! I AIN'T NUTS! I DON'T WANT ANY PART OF THAT THING!
IF YOU WANT HALF OF THE PEARLS, DO WHAT I TELL YA! RUN THAT HEAP BACK TO THE JUNGLE!
OKAY, TOLE! BUT SOMEDAY YOU WON'T HAVE ANYBODY TO DO YOUR DIRTY WORK!

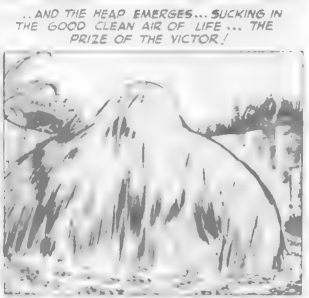
HE'S GOING! IT WORKED! NOW TO GET THE BLACK PEARLS FROM THE CHIEF!
YOU'D BETTER WORK FAST! THAT HEAP MIGHT COME BACK AND THEN WE'LL BE IN FOR TROUBLE!
I RETURN, ONA KOONA! THE GOD OF FIRE HAS BEEN VICTORIOUS OVER THE GOD OF VENGEANCE!
WE ARE SAVED!
OUR LAND IS RESTORED!
YOU SHALL BE REWARDED, PRINCE TOLE! WE SHOW OUR GRATITUDE! ANYTHING YOU WISH SHALL BE GIVEN!
I HAVE SPOKEN WITH THE GODS! THE CHEST OF BLACK PEARLS SHOULD BE MINE AS A REWARD!
SO BE IT! THE GODS HAVE SPOKEN -- I MUST OBEY! WE GO TO THE FORBIDDEN POOL
THE FOOLS! I'LL SOON BE THE RICHEST MAN IN THE WORLD!
YOU MEAN WE'LL BE THE RICHEST MEN IN THE WORLD.. .. DON'T FORGET THAT, TOLE!
SHORTLY, THE PROCESSION COMES TO A MAMMOTH POOL IN THE JUNGLE CLEARING.
THE CHEST OF BLACK DEATH LIES IN THE WATERS OF THE FORBIDDEN POOL BELOW!
AH! BEAUTIFUL BLACK PEARLS! B-BUT AN OCTOPUS! HOW CAN WE REACH THEM?
THE BLACK OCTOPUS HAS BEEN SENT BY THE GODS TO GUARD THE CHEST! IF YOU WANT THE PEARLS, IT IS FOR YOU TO FIND A WAY! OVERCOME THE OCTOPUS AND GET THEM!
WHAT? I, TOLE, DEMAND YOU SEND YOUR DIVERS DOWN FOR THEM!

THE SACRED POOL IS FORBIDDEN TO MY PEOPLE! BUT YOU, PRINCE OF FIRE - SHOULD HAVE NO FEAR!
IT'S A TRICK! YOU'VE CHEATED ME! I'LL KILL YOU FOR THIS!
MY WORD IS NOT BROKEN! THE PEARLS ARE YOURS IF YOU CAN GET THEM!
KEEP BACK! KEEP THESE NATIVES AWAY FROM ME OR I'LL KILL ALL OF YOU
YOU MAKE BIG WORDS, BUT HAVE MUCH FEAR! YOU NO GOD OF FIRE! YOU COME TO ROB MY PEOPLE!!
C'MON, TOLE, LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!
RAINIER THE OCTOPUS! IT'S GOT ME
... AND TOLE'S SCHEME TO PLUNDER THE NATIVES IS ENDED ---
HELP! HELP! IT'S GOT ME! I DON'T WANT TO DIE! RAINIER, HELP! AGHHHH!
YOU LEAVE ISLAND! GO AWAY! WE ARE PEACEFUL PEOPLE!
YEAH! SURE! I-I'LL GO! I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING! I-I'M GOING! DON'T HURT ME!!
MEANWHILE — IN THE DENSE JUNGLE, THE HEAP HAS SMOTHERED HIS BURNS IN THE WET GRASS...
COME! O. HEAP! WE SHALL GO TO THE SACRED POOL- TO COOL YOUR WOUNDS.
LOOK! ONA KOONA! THE HEAP HAS COME BACK! TOLE SED.
SPLASH!
16

AS THE HEAP PLUNGES INTO THE DARK, COOL WATER OF THE SACRED POOL, THE BURNING FIBRES OF HIS BODY AWAKEN WITH NEW LIFE. BUT AS THE SWIRLING WATERS CLEAR, THE STRANGE FORM OF AN OMINOUS CREATURE CONFRONTS HIM....
THE WORLD OF VEGETATION FACES THE DOMAIN OF THE SEA!...
AND AS IF BY SHEER INSTINCT THE TWO GIANTS CLASH IN A STARK, DEATH STRUGGLE THAT SHAKES A VIOLENT CURRENT THROUGH THE STAGNANT WATER
SLOWLY, RELENTLESSLY THE SUCKING TENTACLES OF THE GIANT OCTOPUS ENCOMPASS THE THRASHING BODY OF THE HEAP, CHOKING AWAY HIS EBBING LIFE.
TIGHTER AND TIGHTER THE TENTACLES DRAW AND THE DESPERATE HEAP SLASHES TO THE SURFACE IN A VAIN ATTEMPT TO FIND A VULNERABLE SPOT ON THE MAMMOTH MONSTER...

WITH A STROKE OF LUCK, THE HEAP PLUNGES HIS CLAW INTO THE SOFT FLESH BETWEEN THE DEVILFISH'S EYES - HIS ONE WEAK SPOT! LIMP WITH PAIN, THE OCTOPUS DESCENDS BELOW THE SURFACE AGAIN...


...PURSUING HIS ADVANTAGE, THE HEAP BITES DEEP INTO THE WOUND, DRAWING THE BLOOD OF THE SEA-DEMON... AN INKY SUBSTANCE BLURS THE WATER ... AND THEN A RED FLOW... THE SIGN OF THE BATTLE'S END


...AND THE HEAP EMERGES... SUCKING IN THE GOOD CLEAN AIR OF LIFE ... THE PRIZE OF THE VICTOR!

THE HEAP HAS BROKEN THE EVIL SPELL OVER OUR FORBIDDEN POOL! NOW THE PEARLS CAN BE RESTORED TO THE ALTAR OF PEACE!
THE GODS HAVE SMILED ON US!

AGAIN O HEAP YOU HAVE SHOWN MAN THAT HIS FEAR OF YOU COMES FROM WITHIN THE WARPED CAVERNS OF HIS OWN MIND! YOU HAVE SURVIVED THE JUNGLE - AND NOW YOU MUST GO ON TO MEET THE CHALLENGE OF OTHER PLACES!
THE END

CAPTAIN
COMBAT
CRASHING CRIME
WITH DYNAMITE-PAC
CAPTAIN COMBA
CRACKS THE CAS
THE GLOBES OF GAI
BUT NOT UNTIL ONE O
THE FOULEST VILLAINS
I CONFESS YOUR
ARE SO CRAZY ABC
I'M SUPPOSED TO

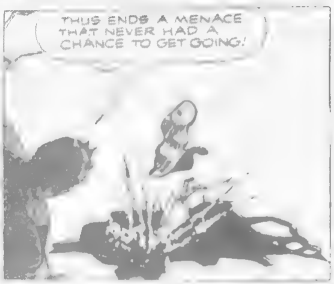
CLAUSES. HOW ABOUT ..XMAS COMES BUT ONCE A YEAR.. JOIN ME, AND EVERY DAY WILL BE XMAS!
WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU'RE T CAPTAIN
I'M AN ACROBAT, AND A GOOD ONE AT THAT, IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF! CAN I MEET YOU AFTER THE PARADE?
LATER...
OF ME! I AGREE TO MEET HIM AND HE STANDS
BUT IT IS MY DELIBERATE
..JUST HAVE TIME
..EVERY DAY WILL BE XMAS WITH ME AND I GUARANTEE THAT...
CLOTHES AND THEN... WHO'S GIVING A SPEECH?
WHAT'S THAT? ILLEGAL? SURE IT'S
CHANCE TO GET N ON THE GROUND FLOOR! FROM NOW TILL XMAS WE'LL ALL HAVE JOBS THAT WILL TAKE
..ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS KEEP
THERE IS LOOT, SEE! I HAVE A NEW WEAPON THAT MAKES THE WHOLE THING FOOL-PROOF!
THIS IS ONE LITTLE NIFTY THAT IS GOING TO BE NIPPED IN THE BUD!

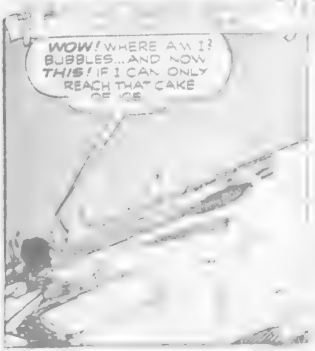
AS LONG AS I'M DRESSED FOR THE PART, I'LL PLAY CAPTAIN COMBAT AND I'LL SMASH THIS EVIL PLOT IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO!
IT WILL BE! WATCH! THIS IS WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO ANY-ONE THAT GETS IN OUR WAY.
I THINK THIS DEMONSTRATION SHOULD CONVINCE YOU OF THE WISDOM OF OBEYING MY ORDERS.
IS HE DEAD?
NOT THIS TIME! I JUST PUT HIM TO SLEEP! BY THE WAY BE CAREFUL OF THOSE OTHER BUBBLES IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE A NAP!
NOW, ALL OF YOU WHO ARE GOING TO JOIN ME RAISE YOUR HANDS. THE OTHERS I'LL B FEW BUBBLES

SOMETHING MY DEAR?

MAYBE HE STOOD TOO LONG AND NOW HE CAN'T EVEN MOVE...LET ALONE STAND! HO!HO! COME CONDER COME BLITZEN...WE HAVE A DATE AT THE RIVER!

THAT WATER LOOKS COLD I'M GLAD IT'S THIS DOT AND NOT ME THAT'S GOING IN! OVER YOU GO!


THUS ENDS A MENACE THAT NEVER HAD A CHANCE TO GET GOING!


WOW! WHERE AM I? BUBBLES...AND NOW THIS! IF I CAN ONLY REACH THAT CAKE OF ICE

I NEVER DID LIKE CRIME OR CRIMINALS...BUT AFTER THIS I'M GOING TO DECLARE A ONE MAN WAR ON CRIME...AND ONE CRIMINAL IN PARTICULAR!

SECURE IN THE BELIEF THERE IS NO ONE TO COMBAT W'M...
GOOD WORK, MY BOY! TAKE THIS PIPE AND BLOW A FEW BUBBLES BEFORE YOU START TO WORK ON THE SAFE! DON'T BREATHE IN IF ONE BREAKS NEAR YOU!
HARD AT WORK...
BURGLAR! HERE NOW... STOP THAT!
YOU COULD AT LEAST STOP BURGLING WHILE I TALK TO
FOR THE CHAIR,
DEAD!
BLUFF ME! THE
QUICK MICKEY!
DOESN'T WANT ANYONE

COULD SAY A
SURE! I'D GIVE
I THOUGHT I
COULD SQUARE
THIS BUM RAP!
GO TO 127
F.R PLACE!
WHERE YOU WERE
CONVENTION: STICK
AROUND AND COME
YOU HEAR
AND YOU
A PRO-

EXCELLENT! WE SHOULD CLEAR A MILLION BY THE TIME THE HOLIDAY IS OVER!
HEY, BOSS... I BLEW BUBBLES LIKE YOU SAID... AND ONE OF 'EM KILLED A G-
I THOUGHT SOME OF YOU WOULD NOTICE THAT! YOU ARE ALL KILLERS NOW... SO IF ANY OF YOU THOUGHT OF DUCKING OUT ON ME.. THINK AGAIN!
HOT!!! NOT WARM
OUTSIDE IN THE COLD...
A PROMOTION IN ME STOCKING... NOW WHAT DID HE MEAN BY THAT! THERE MUST BE DIRTY WORK AFOOT! I BETTER TAKE A LOOK.. BESIDES, IT'LL BE WARMER IN THERE!
CAPTAIN COMBAT, AS I LIVE...AND NOT AT THE BOTTOM OF THE RIVER! AH E... THIS TIME IT WILL BE DIFFERENT!
RIGHT! IT WILL BE DIFFERENT THIS TIME!
...THAT BUBBLE WILL KILL YOU?
OF YOUR FAIRY TALES, ME BHOY

I'M NOT KIDDING! THOSE BUBBLES CONTAIN A DEADLY GAS! DUCK!
YES! DUCK FOR ALL THE GOOD IT'LL DO YOU!
YOU PACK OF IDIOTS! DID YOU REALLY THINK I'D SHARE THIS LOOT WITH YOU? NOW DIE WITH THESE OTHER FOOLS!
NASTY CUSS ISN'T HE?
WELL...WON'T ANY OF YOU DARE TO TRY AND WALK THROUGH MY PRETTY BUBBLES?
I GET A WINDOW OPEN!
HIM!
THIS BUBBLE PIPE KILLED HIM! HE HAD A POISONOUS SUBSTANCE IN THE BOWL OF THE WITH THE POISON! WHEN THE TABLE HIT HIM IN THE STOMACH, HE INHALED HIS OWN POISON!
THIS MEANS A PROMOTION FOR ME! WAIT TILL THE CAPTAIN SEES ALL THAT LOOT!

ATOMAN
TURMOIL AND HORROR OF
THE ATOMIC
A NEW
MAN APPEARS ON THE STAGE OF THE WORLD! WHO IS THIS NEW MAN WHOSE BODY GENERATES ATOMIC POWER? WHOSE MUSCLES GIVE HIM THE COLOSSAL MIGHT OF THE UNIVERSE?
IT IS ATOMAN!
BUT HOW WILL ATOMAN USE HIS STRENGTH! WILL IT BE FOR GOOD OR FOR EVIL? WHAT IS THIS AMAZING STORY THAT COMES RIGHT OUT OF THE HEADLINES? AND LEADS TO...
THE MAKING OF THE MIGHTIEST MAN!

"IT'S A BIG JOB, WE'LL DO IT!

THE SECRET OF ATOMIC POWER MUST NEVER BE PERMITTED TO FALL INTO GREEDY HANDS. WE MUST BE ON GUARD AT ALL TIMES FOR I HAVE TO DOUBT THAT E... MINDS ARE PLOTTING RIGHT NOW...
DANG DE CARNE'S RIGHT, FOR EITH AT THAT VERY MOMENT VAN REILLY PURCHASED PEAT HOUSE...
I TELL YOU VAN REILLY IS UP TO SOMETHING!
ATOMIC POWER.
MORROW NIGHT I SHALL HAVE THE SECRET OF THE ATOM IN MY

WELL, HELLO BARRY! HAVEN'T SEEN YOU ALL DAY, MMM... I LIKE FLOWER YOU'RE WEARING IN FACT, THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN YOU PAYING ATTENTION TO YOUR CLOTHES...
OH, I'VE BEEN DOWN IN THE VAULT CHECKING ALL DAY AND--- HUH? DID YOU SAY FLOWER? WHAT FLOWER?
IN YOUR LAPEL. GEE, I DON'T YOU EVER REMEMBER THAT?
THE FLOWER? OH
WONDERFUL... LIKE A REAL PROFESSOR!
BLOCK THE SIDEWALK MISTER, PEOPLE GOTTA
YOUR FLOWER! YOU MUST HAVE DROPPED WHEN
DEBS ABOUT IT... FOR LATER THAT EVENING...
WONDERFUL FINGERS, WONDERFUL! I NOW HAVE THE SECRET OF THE ATOM IN MY POSSESSION... NOW TO INFORM MY BOARD OF DIRECTORS...

BUT WE GOT THE STUFF, MR. TWIST! WHAT MORE DO WE NEED?
A SAFE FULL OF SECRET PLANS AND OPERATION AND I'VE GOT THE VERY MAN TO CRACK IT — BARRY
THAT NIGHT...
GET UP AND GET DRESSED! YOU'RE COMING WITH US TO — AND A TALK WITH THE BOSS.
I WANT YOU TO WORK FOR ME — AND I'LL PAY YOU WELL! A THOUSAND DOLLARS A WEEK... FAME... POSITION... WEALTH... POWER... ANYTHING YOU ASK!
YOU DO A VERY IMPORTANT JOB, MR. TWIST
WHAT? THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! YOU COULDN'T POSSIBLY HAVE

WHEN YOU KNOW ME BETTER, YOU'LL KNOW THAT I DO THE IMPOSSIBLE!
I CAN'T HAVE A KING WHO THE TRAITOR IS WHO GOT THE ATOMIC SECRET
PERHAPS IF I TELL YOU THAT YOU ARE THE TRAITOR WHO GAVE ME THE SECRET OF THE ATOM... YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND. YOU WOULDN'T WANT THE WORLD TO KNOW YOU BETRAYED YOUR TRUST... WOULD YOU?
YOU WORE THE FLOWER IN YOUR LAPEL ALL DAY WHILE YOU STOLE THE ATOMIC FORMULA... AND INSIDE THE FLOWER WAS THIS SMALL CAMERA TAKING PICTURES OF ALL THE PAPERS!
THAT FLOWER! A MAN BUMPED INTO ME... NOW I REMEMBER! YOU FRAMED ME!
BADLY
MAKE MORE

THERE IS A TRICK TO IT
TO WORKING WITH ME... HMMM... YES SHE'S FINE
...BUT NOTHING HAPPENS AS HE LANDS LIGHTLY ON HIS FEET
HEY! I'M ALL IN ONE PIECE! NO MAN COULD LIVE AFTER
ALREADY AWAKE.
" BROKE OFF. WAS MADE OF
AMAZED TO FIND THAT HIS STRENGTH & PRESSURE TO WIELD THE BROKEN
ENOUGH STEAM TO FILL THE FIRE HYDRANT.
SO NOBODY HE WAS A RE- SULT OF THE SHOCK OF BEING TOSSED OUT OF THE MOON BY WHAT IS TO US LIKE AN ATOMIC EXPLOSION
LIKE AN ATOMIC EXPLOSION?

IF ME! MADAME CURIE DISCOVERED RADIUM LATER HER BODY BECAME RADIO-ACTIVE FROM HANDLED RADIUM FOR YEARS... RADIUM AND URANIUM CAN I BE RADIO-ACTIVE? I'VE GOT TO GET TO MY LAB... RIGHT NOW!
A LIGHT BURNS IN BARRY DALE'S PRIVATE LABORATORY...
THERE'S NO DOUBT ABOUT IT! I AM RADIO-ACTIVE! ELEMENTS IN MY BODY IS SO GEARED AS A RESULT OF WORKING WITH RADIUM AND URANIUM THAT IT CAN EXPLODE ATOMS--- AND GIVE ME ATOMIC STRENGTH!
SO FATE HAS PICKED ME... GIVEN ME STRANGE SUPERHUMAN POWERS... I CAN SMASH MOUNTAINS...
PERHAPS I AM THE TYPE OF MAN WHO MUST EXTENDS AS ATOMIC AGE DE... BECAUSE I AM THE ONLY ATOMAN ON EARTH! AND WHAT AM I TO DO...

ACID
A STREAK OF FURY HURTLES ACROSS THE ROOM SO SWIFTLY THAT IT IS ALMOST INVISIBLE ---!
SOME-THING SMACKED
THE ACID!--- IT STOPPED IN THE NICK OF THE AIR!
OF A NEW AGE OF PEACE, SECURITY AND HAPPINESS FOR ALL PEOPLE.

MR. TWIST THINKS THAT HE'LL
QUICK! GET IN! WE'VE GOT SECONDS TO GET AWAY!
I'LL DO IT --B-- EVEN IF IT MEANS HAVING --BUT SHE'LL BE BURNED TO A CRISP IF I DON'T MOVE FAST!
AND ATOMAN IS ABOUT TO FIND OUT THAT MR. TWIST IS NOT YET THROUGH!

DIVE TOWARD HIM! I'M GOING TO
ATOMAN!
THE NEXT ISSUE OF ATOMAN WILL BRING YOU THE GREATEST ADVENTURE EVER PUBLISHED IN ANY COMIC BOOK!
ASK FOR IT AT YOUR NEWSSTAND!

THE FUNNYMEN

Although some people tend to think of the Golden Age as a time when superheroes and nothing else were to be found in comic books, this wasn't the case at all. There was a great variety of stuff available and even the magazines that were jammed with a half dozen crimefighters always managed to make room for comedy relief. In our Funnymen *section we'll be paying attention each issue to the cartoonists who didn't march to the dominant drummer of the Thirties and Forties, fellows who took the words* comic books *and* funny books *seriously.*

WALT KELLY

Although some people think of the Golden Age as a time when superheroes and nothing else were to be found in comic books, this wasn't the case at all. There was a great deal of other stuff available. In our Funnymen section we pay attention to the cartoonists who didn't march to the dominant drummer of the Thirties and Forties, fellows who took the words *comic book* literally.

Walt Kelly was a contradictory man. In his work he could be gentle and whimsical, while in real life he was often quite the opposite. An expert at drawing lovable animals, pixies and princesses, he was also an enthusiastic participant in the Manhattan saloon life of the Forties. In spite of all the stresses and contradictions, Kelly managed to produce some of the funniest, most visually attractive comic book work of the Golden Age. In addition to *Pogo*, who began life unobtrusively as a comic book character, Kelly drew dozens of other features and turned out hundreds of pages of funny stuff.

Born in 1913 in Philadelphia, Walter Crawford Kelly moved to Bridgeport, Connecticut two years later along with "father, mother, sister and sixteen teeth, all his own." The impulse to be a cartoonist hit him quite young and while in high school he drew not only for the school paper and yearbook, but for the local newspaper as well. Although the majority of his comic book work was produced in the 1940s, Kelly did sell a bit of work to the magazines in the days before a single superhero had leaped over a single skyscraper. For Major Nicholson's pioneering *New Comics* Kelly did some centerspreads based on *Gulliver's Travels*, etc., in 1935. *Funny Pages* ran a couple examples of Cannonball Jones, a chap who was trying to get back to nature. Not especially funny or well-drawn, these look like samples of a newspaper strip Kelly hadn't been

able to sell.

The turning point of his life, or at least of his drawing style, came when he journeyed to California to work at the Walt Disney Studio. While there, Kelly "and 1500 other worthies" turned out *Snow White, Fantasia, Pinocchio, Dumbo* and *The Reluctant Dragon*. Leaving Disney in 1941, he returned to the East Coast. "Back in the USA once more," as he later described his return to the New York area, "Kelly went straight. He got a job doing comic books." He was hired by Oscar Lebeck, who was editing the comics Whitman and Dell were jointly producing and publishing. Fresh from several years of drawing funny animals in Hollywood, Kelly must've seemed ideally suited to go to work on the new kid titles — *Animal Comics, Our Gang* and *FairyTale Parade* — Dell was launching.

Kelly split himself in two at Dell. One persona specialized in cute stuff, Disneyized animals and adorable kids. The other, a much more rowdy fellow, still drew sort of cute but had a lowbrow streak and delighted in slapstick situations and screwball dialogue. The nice Dr. Jekyll side of Kelly's artistic personality is most evident in the sort of work he did for magazines like *Raggedy Ann & Andy, Fairy Tale Parade* and *Santa Claus Funnies*. For the ragdoll comic he drew a regular feature entitled *Walt Kelly's Animal Mother Goose*, wherein he illustrated nursery rhymes in his best children's book manner. He also now and then did features about creatures like chipmunks in which such words as scamper occured quite a lot. While Kelly loosened up a bit turning *The Gingerbread Man* and similar tales into comic book stories, he was usually careful to remain cute and polite most of the time.

His Mr. Hyde side surfaced in the shortlived *Camp Comics*. Dell in those days, at the time when the United States was entering the Second World War, was a very wholesome outfit. So even this comic book, obviously aimed at the somewhat more mature audience to be found at military camps, is pretty tame. Kelly contributed an eight page yarn about Seaman Sy Wheeler to each of *Camp's* three issues. Syclops

PAT, PATSY & PETE —

A screwball saga that starred a pair of real kids, a talking penguin and a short-tempered pirate named Percy. Kelly drew six episodes for Looney Tunes *in 1946. When able to indulge his rowdy side, Kelly could produce some of the best slapstick in comics.*

Wheeler and his diminutive sidekick Clarence get into a series of raucous situations each time, usually involving them with women, the law and other natural antagonists of sailors. One story has Clarence dressing up like a kid to ride half fare on the train and then switching to drag to escape

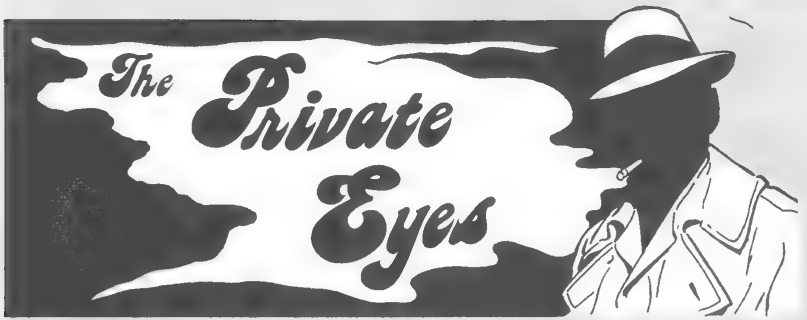
trouble. While not especially subtle, this feature was lively and demonstrated Kelly's knack for staging comic action and creating snappy dialogue.

Kelly also let loose in *Pat, Patsy and Pete*, a screwball saga that starred a pair of real kids, a talking penguin and a short-tempered pirate named Percy. It appeared, appropriately enough, in *Looney Tunes*, where he drew six episodes in 1943. The feature had been started by Win Smith, a onetime Disney animator who'd worked on the early *Mickey Mouse* newspaper strip. George Storm also drew it before Kelly served his hitch. Moving away from what his predecessors had done and forgetting about fantasy, Kelly turned *Pat, Patsy and Pete* into a series of slapstick comedies. Percy is the same sort of violent but lovable rascal as Albert the Alligator and he has his own distinctive style of speech — "Blow me down! It's November an' time for me annual bath!" In the yarn about Percy's bath Kelly manages to include crabs in the bathwater, nudity, collapsing chimneys, sundry other mock violence and a few digs at Christmas and Santa Claus. At one point sweet little Patsy takes off after Percy with a blunderbuss loaded with small cannonballs, crying "Some dirty ol' geezer is tryin' to steal our chimney!" Chimneys fascinated Kelly and he utilized them, and their collapsing, more than once. What this particular feature looks like is a slightly cockeyed Walt Kelly version of the Laurel & Hardy shorts, with a touch of the Katzenjammer Kids mixed in for good measure. Kelly was able here, which he couldn't do in his more sedate stuff, to build gags and comedy situations. He needed the elbow room and the relative freedom from restraints the monthly eight page format allowed.

For *Walt Disney's Comics and Stories* Kelly was usually his more polite self. He began drawing the covers in 1943 and turned out most of them for the next five years and more. Over at *Our Gang* he drew the monthly adventures of the MGM movie kids, most often in a fairly realistic manner. Sometimes, though, he'd allow himself to be whimsical. One of the less restrained episodes involves a goat who swallows a mechanical talking parrot and starts saying, "Polly want a cracker," "Hiya kid," and other pithy expressions at moments when they'll produce the most dire repercussions.

The feature wherein Kelly was able to indulge both his cute and his rowdy modes began in *Animal Comics* in 1942. Although the original star of the magazine was that venerable rabbit gentleman Uncle Wiggily, Kelley's Pogo and associates eventually pushed him into a second banana position. Initially Pogo was just a "spear carrier," handicapped, as Kelly later pointed out, because "he looked just like a possum. As time went on, this condition was remedied and Pogo took on a lead role." The feature appeared under a number of titles in its early days — *Bumbazine and the Singing Alligator, Albert and the Noah Count Ark*, etc. — before settling down as *Albert and Pogo*. Bumbazine was a small black boy who shared the swamp with the animal characters and, somewhat like Christopher Robin, was able to talk to them. As the strip progressed Bumbazine and the other swamp denizens abandoned conventional sppech for a sort of patois that was part Southern, part *Li'l Abner* — "Man! Ah di'n't know yo' was a edge-you-cated owl." "Oh, sho! Ah comes from a long line of smart-headed owls." By the time Pogo reached his cute, non-scraggly state, Bumbazine had departed. The first comic book of nothing but Pogo came along in the spring of 1946, entitled *Albert the Alligator & Pogo Possum*. By 1949 a *Pogo Possum* magazine was being issued on a fairly regular basis. It folded in 1954 after sixteen issues. The *Pogo* comic strip started running nationally in 1949.

In the comic book Pogo stories, where Kelly had ten or more pages to play around with, he blended smart dialogue and broad comedy situations. The result was something that was both amusing to look at and amusing to read. He couldn't always control his bawdy leanings and old burlesque routines, including characters dressing up in drag, would now and then show up. At times he'd even slip in the punchline of a well-known dirty joke. What Kelly didn't use in the funny book version of his swamp epic was the political satire, which grew increasingly heavyhanded in his last years, that graced the newspaper strip. He obviously wasn't taking himself too seriously back then and the result was some very funny stuff.



Since one of our intentions in this magazine is to demonstrate that the Golden Age was much more than superheroes, we're inaugurating a new now-and-then department. Herein we'll pay attention to the numerous private investigators who gumshoed across the pages of the Thirties and Forties. Hardboiled dicks, sophisticated sleuths, masked marvels and an occassional buffoon will eventually get turns here. In this installment, we'll trace the four-color career of one of the most enduring pulp crimefighters of the first part of this century—Nick Carter.

NICK CARTER

If sheer longevity and stamina make a superhero, then detective Nick Carter is one of the superheroes of this world. A master of disguise, long before the Shadow, assisted by a trained organization, his exploits thrilled a generation in the pages of various Street & Smith publications at the turn of the century. Serials about Nick Carter began in 1886 in the *New York Weekly* and from 1891, when the first issue of the weekly *Nick Carter Library* appeared, to 1936, when the final issue of the pulp *Nick Carter Magazine* hit the stands, he appeared in over one thousand stories. After a brief hiatus, he made a comeback in three MGM films starring Walter Pidgeon. Spurred by this, his publishers put him in his first comic book adventure in 1940 and the cycle began again.

The first issue of *Shadow Comics* included a number of characters from the pages of past Street & Smith publications. As though the publishers couldn't decide which characters might be successful in this new venture, they included Frank Merriwell, the Shadow, Doc Savage, Norgil the Magician, some of Horatio Alger's characters, the Avenger and frontier hero Diamond Dick. Aarn Munro, a hero from *Astounding Science Fiction*, appeared as Iron Munro the Astounding Man. Only the Shadow, Doc Savage and Nick Carter survived until the final issue (101) in the summer of 1949.

Nick Carter's career in the comics can be divided into two sections. The first, roughly from 1940 to 1943, which corresponds to the period when it was produced for Street & Smith by the Jack Binder shop, can be called the section of experiment. The second, 1944 to 1949, the period of maturity.

During the first section there is an ambiguous quality to the strip that must have puzzled readers who tried to follow it from issue to issue. There is an uncertainty about the type of stories, what sort of cases Nick Carter should solve, even what Nick Carter should look like.

Unfortunately no record remains of the authors of the scripts of all the stories, but it is obvious that several hands had a part in the drawings. Until 1944 it was rare for the same artist to do more than two stories in succession. The styles ranged from the cartoon figures of Jack Farr, whose work suggested very well the old-time melodramatic period in Nick Carter's career, to the illustrationally realistic quality of the artist who signed himself Hall. His Nick Carter is clearly patterned after the movie Nick.

True to the temper of the times, the plots often reflected themes from World War II, with saboteurs serving as the prime villains. The very first story, *Six Rings of Death*, was adapted from the April, 1933 issue of the Nick Carter pulp and drawn by George Marcoux, who went on to do *Supersnipe*. The third issue of *Shadow Comics* carried a Nick Carter story, drawn by Jack Farr, that brought the great detective face to face with his arch enemy from the dime novels and pulps, Dr. Jack Quartz. Quartz made his first appearance way back in 1891. Setting the pattern for many later villains, Quartz would no sooner be thought safely dead or jailed than he would reappear, alive and free. Sometimes he would pretend to be his own twin brother. This story in the comic book would seem to be his final, final bow as, confronted with his guilt for the murder of a beautiful opera singer, he swallows a poison capsule.

In 1941 Nick Carter helped launch

The definitive Nick Carter, drawn by Bob Powell.

a new comic called *Army and Navy Comics* (Street & Smith had published an *Army and Navy Weekly* in 1897). No Nick Carter yarns appeared in *Shadow Comics* during 1941 and it may have been intended that Nick become a regular feature of the new magazine. In spite of the two wartime espionage stories used, Nick somehow didn't fit in the magazine. When it introduced Supersnipe it became even more apparent that the great detective didn't belong and he was returned to the pages of *Shadow Comics*.

Nick Carter also showed up in three issues of *Doc Savage Comics* in 1943. Perhaps this was an attempt on the part of the publisher to increase circulation. If so, it didn't succeed, for *Doc Savage Comics* soon ceased publication. But during those three issues something happened that strengthened the Nick Carter series and gave it a new direction. In the spring of 1943 Nick Carter went on the radio.

Street & Smith weren't slow to advertise the new series in their pulp magazines and comic books. The cover of *Doc Savage* for August, 1943, displayed a photograph of actor Lon Clark, script in hand, before the WOR microphone. In the story in that issue, and the next two as well, there was some attempt to pattern the comic book Nick Carter after the radio series and the detective began to resemble Clark in appearance. This became more apparent when the strip returned to its proper place in the pages of *Shadow Comics*.

By 1945 Nick Carter had almost been replaced by the adventures of his foster son, Chick Carter. Before Nick returned on a regular basis, Chick's Inner Circle Gang fought crime, collected scrap for the war effort, raised money for the Red Cross by staging a circus. Soon after that Chick was drafted into the Air Cadets and Nick Carter came back for good. By this time Nick was a leaner figure than the reader had been used to and sported a neatly-trimmed moustache.

If Nick Carter had an arsenal of weapons in his dime novel days, his comic book version was not far behind. In the old days Nick was equipped with two guns attached with springs inside his coat sleeves. In a crisis they could be snapped into his hands. In the comics Nick carried a small throwing knife in his hat which he often pinned an adversary's gun arm to the wall with. He only aimed for the coat sleeve, never the arm itself. In at least one story Nick's hat was lined with tool steel to ward off the inevitable blows from crooks. The later stories often featured simple feats of deduction which allowed the reader to participate in solving the mystery. A man hides a note between pages 87 and 88 of a book, a bell tolls in a tower that has no bell, a cardplaying robot hands the deck of cards to Nick instead of the man who owns it; these are some of the clues which are simple yet not simple-minded.

The work of John Meditz on this series deserves special mention. He seems to have come out of nowhere, drawn for Street & Smith and then vanished. He was a fine artist who may have had some experience in the advertising field. During his short period with S & S his work was easily the most distinctive in each issue of

John Meditz was a fine artist who seems to have come out of nowhere, worked in comics for a short period and then vanished.

The illustrationally realistic works of an artist who signed himself Hall. His Nick Carter is closely patterned after the movie version.

LOOKOUT FOR YOURSELF, SENOR, MOREZ!
WHAT'S UP?
ARREST THIS MAN FOR THE MURDER OF MY UNCLE!
THIS CIGAR CASE CONTAINS A HYDERMIC LOADED WITH THE VENOM OF A CORAL SNAKE!
YOU SEE? AND AT THE SAME TIME, MOREZ RELEASED A HARMLESS SCARLET SNAKE FROM HIS HOLLOW CANE!
BUT PEOPLE MISTOOK IT FOR A DEADLY CORAL SNAKE!
HERE IS A FRAGMENT MOREZ OVERLOOKED... I DON'T HAVE TO EXAMINE IT... I KNEW THE CASE WAS HOLLOW... IT BROKE SO EASILY...!
BUT THE MONEY IS GONE...!
NOT AT ALL— WE'LL FIND IT IN MOREZ'S ROOM
ON THE WAY UPSTAIRS: NICK ANALYZES THE CASE THUS: MOREZ, KNOWING CROOKS WERE AROUND, GAVE NICK A DUPLICATE CHEST CONTAINING A TIME BOMB THAT BLEW THE VAULT...!!
CROOKS DIED FOR THIS VAULT AND FOUND NOTHING...! HERE IS THE REAL CHEST, CONTAINING YOUR UNCLE'S MONEY, SENORITA!
YOUR MONEY NOW, JACINTA
OUR MONEY, BILL!

Shadow Comics. His figures were graceful and natural, his panels detailed yet uncluttered.

In April of 1947 Bob Powell drew his first Nick Carter story. While not diminishing the contribution of Meditz, we would suggest here that his was the definitive Nick Carter. Written by Bruce Elliot, the stories were a joy to read and a treat for the eye. This was Nick Carter's finest hour as the radio series was brought to visual life. Powell's Nick was tall, broad-shouldered, graying at the temples, handsomely moustached. Patsy Bowen his secretary was blonde but not dumb, well-curved and athletic, the perfect foil for the deductive skills of the master detective. When action was called for it was ably handled with long, exaggerated sweeps of the heads and twists of the body. Not since the Meditz stories had the humor been so much a part of the plot.

The Elliott-Powell stories for 1947 were true problems in deduction. There wasn't an extraneous scene in any of them. Sometimes the reader was able to follow the plot closely enough to solve the mystery for himself (on which side of a windowpane does frost form?), sometimes only Nick was allowed to see the vital clue ("From the knife wounds it was obvious he was held down on the floor when he was stabbed."). Nick employs his knowledge of various arcane subjects to solve some of the cases. He determines that a will, supposedly written in 1895, couldn't have included a word coined in 1914, for instance. Postwar problems included the grey market, an outgrowth of the black market in which organized crime profits from shortages of goods. A Greenwich Village artist leaves a dying message that only Nick can interpret, an escaping bank robber chooses Nick's car in which to make his getaway (with Patsy still behind the wheel), a trail of counterfeit money leads Nick to Marseilles and a meeting with a man who is his criminal double. Westmouth, Maine is the setting for the final case as the murder of the father of a Broadway producer proves to involve an uprising against the Chilean government in 1915 and a revenge that took 34 years to be carried out.

And there it all ended, for it was the summer of 1949 and Street & Smith stopped publishing their pulps and comics.

DE FUCCIO AT LARGE

Mad maven and longtime comics writer Jerry De Fuccio remembers his early days in the funnybook industry

Herb Rogoff began his career in comics in the early 1940s as a letterer and artist. He later became an editor at Hillman, where he worked on titles such as *Airboy*. Moving to Ziff-Davis, he was responsible for *G.I. Joe* and a wide assortment of others. After I tracked him down, we did a phone warm-up and then I sent him daily memory-kickers. What follows is an account of Rogoff's adventures in comics, in his own words.

The summer of 1943, when I was sixteen years old, I joined MLJ as a letterer. I got the job on the strength of my lettering samples which I spent many hours at home preparing. When I was required to do the lettering at the shop, and at *their* pace, however, I flopped gloriously. Rather than fire me, editor Harry Shorten made me an apprentice (today I'd be called a "Gopher").

I remember only two artists—Carl Hubbell, who drew *Sgt. Boyle*, and Irv Novick, who drew *The Shield* in *Pep Comics* (and later on ended up working for me on *G.I.Joe* at Ziff-Davis). I can keep in memory Carl Hubbell. First, for the obvious reason that he has the same name as the immortal New York Giants pitcher; second, that he rescued me from a terribly frustrating experience. I was ruling, with ink, the panels of Hubbell's *Sgt. Boyle* strip and, being unfamiliar with a ruling pen and a metal T-square, managed to smear the entire panel of his pencil drawing along with the lettering. Terrorized, I started whiting-out between the pencil lines, doing this surreptitiously. An impossible task, I now know, but for a frightened sixteen year old, it was much preferred to confessing to one and all that I had goofed, especially since I was already a one-time loser at the drawing board.

Hubbell spotted me with jar of white poster paint in hand and red sable brush in the other, busily at work whiting-out around the balloon. He returned to my table with a piece of bristol board on which he had drawn a duplicate of the destroyed panel, and had lettered again what had appeared there. With a swipe of rubber cement, he covered up the blacked out panel along with my futile attempts to salvage it. At that point, Carl Hubbell was my god.

I worked that one short stint at MLJ and, the next summer, upon graduation from the High School of Music and Art, enrolled at the Art Students League until I went into the Marine Corps the next year. Incidentally, other alumni of HSMA were Joe Kubert and Norman Maurer.

Back in civilian life, I took advantage of the G.I. Bill and attended a school that was under the direction of Burne Hogarth, of *Tarzan* fame. I wanted to learn how to be a cartoonist and this school, the Rhodes School, was the only one in the city, if not in the whole country, that specialized in this discipline. One of the classmates whom I remember was Jerry Marcus, who became a successful gag cartoonist and now draws *Trudy* for King Features. The school went on to become the Cartoonists and Illustrators School, and then the School of Visual Arts.

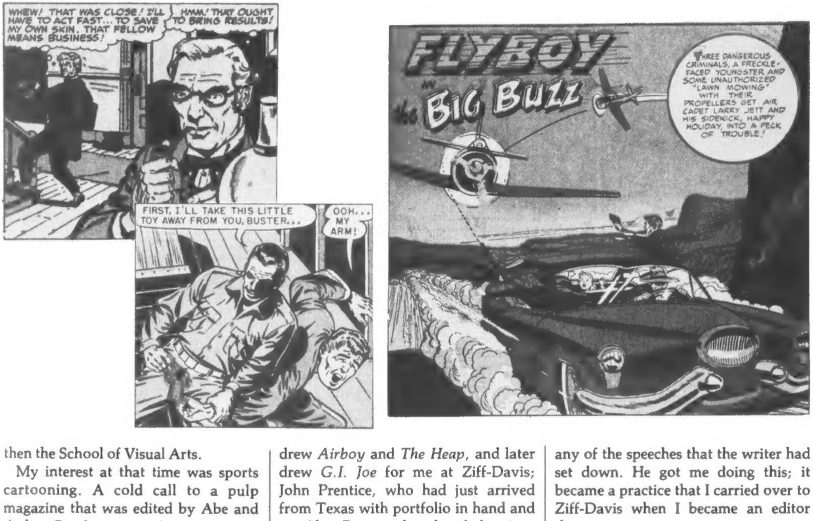
My interest at that time was sports cartooning. A cold call to a pulp magazine that was edited by Abe and Arthur Goodman earned me a freelance spot drawing filler pages for *Complete Sports*. My feature was called "Great Moments in Sports" (Scintillatingly original) and I was paid $15 per page. It was through the Goodman brothers that I became acquainted with another Goodman brother—Martin—who published a string of comic magazines edited by Stan Lee. I joined the lettering pool, staying there until Ed Cronin wrote me to join him at Hillman. I had met Cronin a few months earlier when I sold him some filler pages for his comic magazine, *All-Sports Comics*.

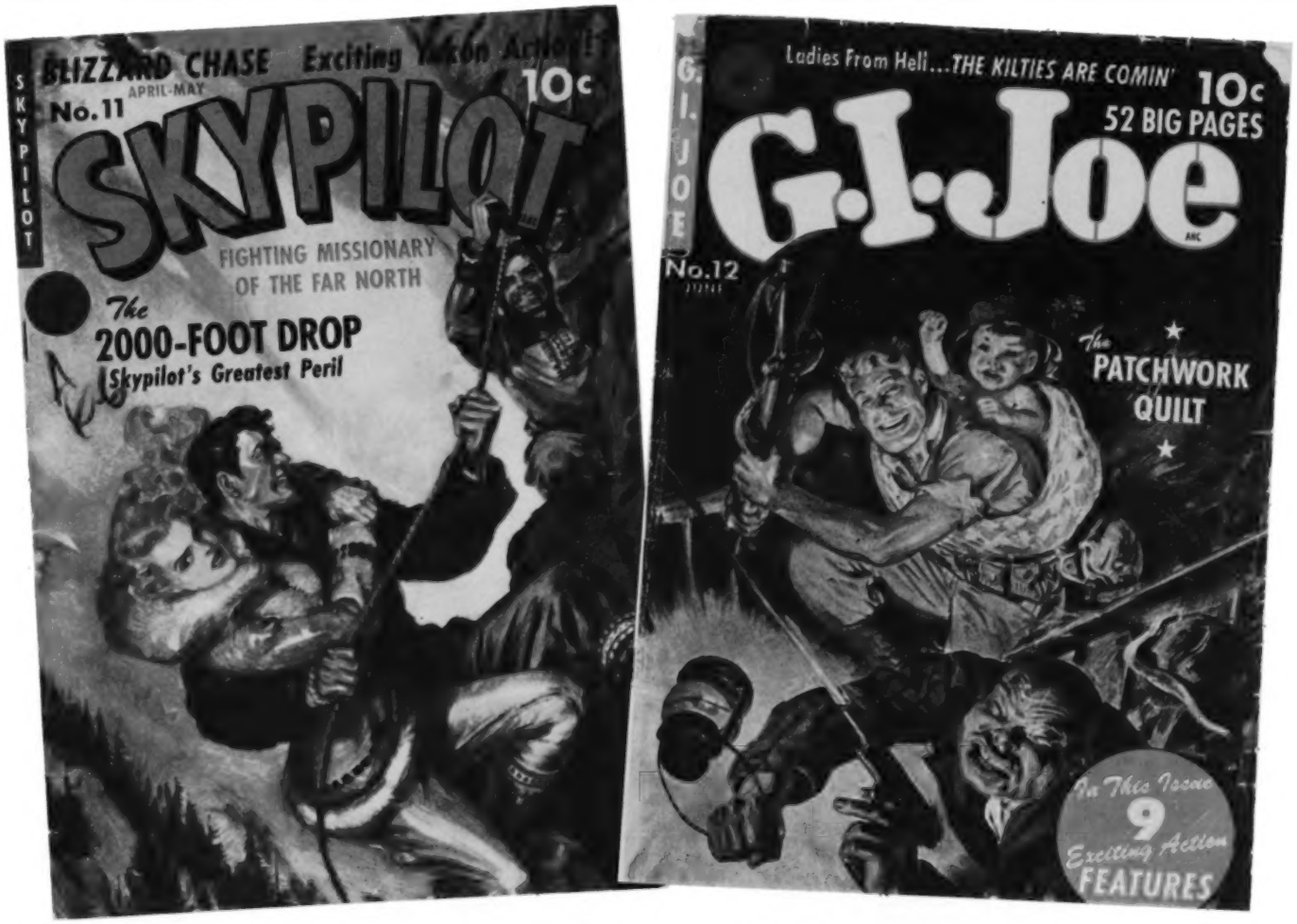
I joined Hillman early in 1949, short months after being married. Ed's assistant then was Tex Blaisdell. Three months later Tex left to go out on his own and I stepped into his spot. I really couldn't have done that without the guidance of Tex. In the short time that I knew him he was a good friend, totally unselfish with his help and advice. Our books when I joined the company were *Airboy*, *Crime Detective*, *Real Clue*, *All-Sports Comics* and later, *Pirates*. Artists working for us then included Ernie Schroeder, who drew *Airboy* and *The Heap*, and later drew *G.I. Joe* for me at Ziff-Davis; John Prentice, who had just arrived from Texas with portfolio in hand and an Alex Raymond style of drawing; and Leonard Starr, young, brash, extremely talented.

Another artist was Gerald McCann, right out of the pulp magazines with his distinctive drybrush style. He also joined Ziff-Davis, doing sports and other features. Our covers at Hillman were created by Dan Zolnerowich. Every once in awhile, he would get a story to draw, but by and large he was our main man for covers. I remember Dan as a taciturn sort, humorless, businesslike.

Our story conferences at Hillman were memorable to say the least. Ed Cronin, now that I look back on it, was so good at creating comic stories because he never had a grip on reality. I remember one instance when he began, "Airboy is about to get into his birdplane when suddenly the Empire State Building comes flying by . . ." And from that wild germ of an idea an entire fanciful, thrilling tale evolved. Ed also rewrote every story that came in. Not on the typewritten script, but on the pencilled drawings. He would change every bit of dialogue in each panel until it bore no relationship to any of the speeches that the writer had set down. He got me doing this; it became a practice that I carried over to Ziff-Davis when I became an editor there.

Ziff-Davis entered the comic business in high style. With slick publications like *Popular Photography*, *Modern Bride*, *Flying Magazine* and others, publisher William B. Ziff had earned a lot of money and he was not afraid to spend it. Once he decided he wanted to get into the comic business, he went after an editor he felt was the very best. He sent for Jerry Siegel. Who else better, he reasoned, than the creator of *Superman?* He gave Jerry *carte blanche*, leaving the titles up to him. Jerry created *Little Al of the Secret Service*, *Lars of Mars*, *Crime Clinic*, *Wild Boy*,


WHEW! THAT WAS CLOSE! I'LL HAVE TO ACT FAST... TO SAVE MY OWN SKIN. THAT FELLOW MEANS BUSINESS!
HMM! THAT OUGHT TO BRING RESULTS!
FIRST, I'LL TAKE THIS LITTLE TOY AWAY FROM YOU, BUSTER...
OOH... MY ARM!
FLYBOY
in the BIG BUZZ
THREE DANGEROUS CRIMINALS, A FRECKLE-FACED YOUNGSTER AND SOME UNAUTHORIZED "LAWN MOWING" WITH THEIR PROPELLERS GET AIR CADET LARRY JETT AND HIS SIDEKICK, HAPPY HOLIDAY, INTO A PECK OF TROUBLE!



Perfect Love, Bill Stern's Sports Book, G.I. Joe, etc.

I was hired by Siegel, in 1952 I believe, primarily because of my experience with Cronin; my background with sports was also a factor. After a month at Z-D, time spent reading scripts and also editing those that were purchased, I was called into the office of vice president Louis Zara. He was supervising the entire comic book operation, although he knew nothing about comic books or the kinds of people who put them together. He and Ziff were impressed with my work, he told me, and now they wanted me to embark on an important project. Namely, creating an entire cast of characters for *G.I. Joe*, their most promising property. I was flattered, obviously, but also confused. Since Jerry Siegel was the editor of *G.I. Joe*, and all the other books, why hadn't they asked him to do this for his own magazine? I didn't know then that they were in the process of easing Jerry out of the picture.

Upon Siegel's departure, the thirty or so titles were distributed between me and Ed Murphy, the other editor. We were now in business and ready to roll. Paying the best rates in the industry, we soon had every top writer and artist breaking down our doors. There was Dan Barry, the highest-paid in the shop; George Olesen, whose pencils were so detailed anyone could have inked over them; Alex Kotzky, who drew many sports features and also *Flyboy*; Bernie Krigstein, a fantastic draftsman; and of course, Mike Suchorsky.

A first, as far as I know, were the painted covers we used instead of the conventional, traditional line covers with flat color. We were all fighting for attention, with more than 500 titles being published. We certainly got it with our covers for awhile, at least, as sales mushroomed in the early years of Ziff-Davis. Two artists shared all of the cover assignments. One of them painted the whimsical covers and his name escapes me. The other artist was Norman Saunders from the pulp magazine field. Norm was good and he was fast, capable of painting as many as seven a week for us, and heaven knows how many for other publications. Later artists who helped us with covers were Rafael de Soto and Everett Raymond Kinstler.

Not long after de Soto started painting our covers, we abandoned them in favor of the conventional line drawings. At about that time Ernie Schroeder began drawing *G.I. Joe*. Henry Sharp was the first artist. He was there when I joined Z-D, therefore I knew little about him. If you recall G.I. Joe, he wore a silly daisy in his helmet. I assume that Henry drew this as an ironic touch and it rapidly became the soldier's trademark. When Henry quit the strip to travel west, Irv Novick took over.

I've enjoyed my career. I now wish I could remember more of the many talented people who worked for me during the golden era.